

of the Union the Presidents came from two States—Virginia and Massachusetts. Then there followed a period when, the growing West requiring recognition, Tennessee, Ohio, and New York commanded the situation for the next sixteen years. The Mexican War gave us a soldier who practically represented no State, and was succeeded by a New Yorker. Then for the only time in our history “off States” had a showing, and Pennsylvania and New Hampshire had their innings. Since then the successful candidates have been again strictly limited to “pivotal States”—New York in the East and Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio in the West.

This condition is unsatisfactory. The magnetic Blaine from Maine was defeated, as was Bryan from Nebraska. Had the former hailed from New York and the latter from Illinois, the electoral votes and influence of those States might have secured their election.

It would be dangerous, and almost a certain provocation of civil war, to change the election of President to a per capita vote by the whole of the Union. Then a charge of a fraudulent vote at any precinct or voting place, however remote, might affect the result; and as frauds would most likely occur in those States where the majorities are largest—as in Pennsylvania or Texas, Ohio or Georgia—a contest would always be certain. Whereas, now, frauds in States giving large majorities, unless of great enough magnitude to change the electoral vote of the whole State, can have no effect. The remedy is, preserving the electoral vote system as now, and giving the smaller States, as now, the advantage of electoral votes to represent their Senators, to divide the electoral vote of each State according to the popular vote for each candidate, giving each his pro rata of the electoral vote on that basis, the odd elector being apportioned to the candidate having the largest fraction. Thus in New York, Mr. Blaine would have gotten 17 electoral votes and Mr. Cleveland 18. Other States would have also divided, more or less evenly; but the result would be that the choice of President would no longer be restricted to two or three States, as in our past history, and is likely to be always the case as long as the whole electoral vote of two or three large pivotal States must swing to one side or other and determine the result. This change would avoid the present evil of large sums being spent to carry the solid electoral vote of “pivotal” States, for there would cease to be “pivotal” States. At the same time this would avoid the open gulf into which a per capita ballot by the whole Union would lead us. While the electoral vote of a State should be divided, pro rata, according to the popular vote for each candidate, it is essential that each State should vote as one district, since its boundaries are unchangeable. To permit the Legislature of each State to divide it into electoral districts would simply open up competition in the art of gerrymandering.

By the Convention of 1787 the term of the President was originally fixed at seven years and he was made ineligible for reelection. This was reduced to four years by a compromise that he could be reelected